Stranger Friendships by betternname2come

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Eleven wants to thank the person who saved her friends.

Stranger Friendships

Author's Note:

> I just need Steve and Eleven to speak to each other next season. It could be hilarious.

There's a knock on his door the day after, well, everything happens. It's too early, and Steve's entire body is aching from the beatdown he got last night, and he does not want to get out of bed *at all*. But his parents are gone (again), and the knocking becomes more persistent, more urgent, and the thought that this is probably Dustin with some new earth-shattering crisis that he'll have to save these idiots from again finally urges him out of bed. He stumbles downstairs and opens the door.

"Look, you little shits better not need another rescue already." The words are out of Steve's mouth before he can register that it's not Dustin at the door. It's that girl, the one that really saved everyone. Eleven.

She jumps back just a little at his words and somewhere in the back of Steve's mind it clicks that pissing off the telekinetic girl is probably a bad idea. He has seen *Carrie*.

"Sorry, I thought you were someone else," he says to the girl he has never spoken to before, who until last night he was not entirely convinced was real. "What are you doing here? Is everything okay? Did something go wrong with the gate?" Because of course, something would go wrong, it's their lives after all, where monsters literally come up out of the depths of the earth and can't the town just stay saved for once?

Eleven shakes her head. "No. Nothing's wrong." A tiny smile plays on her lips and it occurs to Steve that this may be the first time in her life she's been able to make that statement. The small falls from her face though as she studies his. "You're hurt."

"Yeah, well, Billy Hargrove fights dirty."

Eleven tilts her head just a little as she asks, “Dirty?”

And, shit, right, she doesn’t know words a normal thirteen-year-old does because some government psychos kept her locked up for most of her life (as if the *actual* monsters in this town weren’t enough). “No, not like ‘dirt’ dirty. It means unfair. He cheated. I could’ve kicked his ass if he hadn’t.”

“He tried to hurt Lucas.” Her voice is angrier now, and Steve can tell she’s imagining the same bruises and split lip on Lucas instead.

“I don’t think Lucas has to worry now,” Steve says, trying to soothe her. “I hear Max made some pretty damn good threats.”

“I heard,” Eleven says begrudgingly. “And I heard you saved Mike from the monster.”

“Yeah, well, Nancy would’ve killed me if I hadn’t,” he replies. “What are doing here?”

“I came back here to save them,” Eleven says, and Steve wonders briefly if she realizes he meant his house, not Hawkins, before she continues. “I couldn’t save my friends *and* close the gate. I – I want to say thank you. For protecting them.”

Steve wants to downplay it, say he hadn’t really done much, but he sees how very seriously Eleven is taking this and instead nods. “Of course. They’d have done the same thing for me. Well, Max kinda already did.”

Eleven doesn’t look too happy to hear Max’s name again, but she shakes it off. “You saved my friends. I think that makes us friends. Friends do anything for each other,” she says seriously. “If you ever need anything, I can help. I will help. Just tell me.”

Steve wants to brush her offer off, and if it were Dustin or Mike he could, easily, but this kid just makes everything so intense. “I will. But I don’t need anything now. I just need to sleep and – “ he gestures towards his face – “let this heal.”

Eleven nods and starts to turn away, but then she turns back and has her arms wrapped around Steve’s waist.

“Whoa,” Steve says, wrapping an arm around her shoulder. “Hey, it’s okay. Your friends are okay. Everything’s fine.”

Eleven nods, but doesn’t pull back.

“Hey, El, we should go before Hopper starts looking for you,” Nancy calls from the driver seat of her mom’s car and Steve blames the concussion for not noticing her at the end of his driveway before.

Slowly, Eleven pulls back and walks back to the car.

Nancy smiles apologetically. “Sorry to wake you up. She insisted. Apparently, Dustin wouldn’t stop talking about how awesome you are. She wanted to see for herself and thank you. I wasn’t gonna tell her no.”

“Yeah, I can see how that would be hard,” Steve replies.

“Mrs. Byers is making breakfast for everyone. You want to come with us? I mean, we saved the world, right? We should all be celebrating.”

“She’s making real waffles,” Eleven adds. “Mike says they’re even better than Eggos.”

“Even better than Eggos, huh? That is a hard offer to pass up.” He walks towards the car and settles into the backseat. “Hey, she didn’t happen to open the freezer yet, did she?”

“I don’t know. Why?”

“I might have stuck a demodog in there.”

“What?!”

Steve raised his hands in surrender. “Don’t look at me, it was Dustin’s idea.”